

Animal Legal Defense

Yale Law School | 127 Wall Street | New Haven, Connecticut 06511

Testimony of Animal Legal Defense at Yale Law School in support of HB 6565, An Act Concerning Humane Education, for the Education Committee

March 9, 2009

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

This testimony is respectfully submitted on behalf of Animal Legal Defense, a student organization at Yale Law School dedicated to reducing animal suffering by fostering a community of concerned students, advocating for anti-cruelty legislation, providing resources on animal law, and reaching out to the wider community. **Animal Legal Defense urges you to support HB 6565, An Act Concerning Humane Education.** This bill would help ensure that students' personal ethical or religious positions regarding the humane treatment of animals are respected by prohibiting educators from requiring students to perform experiments or dissections on any animal as part of classroom instruction.

Students' moral and religious beliefs should be respected and therefore students should have the right to decide whether to participate in or observe educational activities involving animals. Many students face discrimination from both teachers and other students for objecting to dissection and other animal projects; some even receive lower grades because of their positions. Many more are afraid to speak up and subsequently abandon the study of science altogether. These situations occur even though there are suitable alternatives to dissection that accomplish the same level of learning and are in many instances less expensive.

It is important to honor a student's conviction against dissection and vivisection. Whether a student takes issue with educational dissection on moral or religious grounds, the choice to participate in such activities should remain with the student and alternatives should be made available to her. Currently, ten states (Florida, California, Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island, Illinois, Virginia, Oregon, New Jersey, and Vermont) have laws that allow students to refuse to participate in classroom exercises—particularly dissections—that are harmful to animals, and five other states (Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Mexico) have passed resolutions extending students the same consideration (Source:

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We commend the Committee for considering this important legislation and hope that you will decide to support HB 6565 and codify student choice in Connecticut to protect both students and animals.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Sorenson, Animal Legal Defense Co-chair